

CHAPTER 217

December 4, 2011

"It's no use, man. We can't find him."

Justin and most of the gang had been woken this morning by Yosuke calling everyone up to notify them he couldn't find Teddie anywhere. They had just assumed he went home on his own after what happened to Nanako, but it turned out that wasn't the case as Yosuke found his room strangely vacant. He looked around that night, but there was no sign of him. And that meant the manhunt started today. Or at least, it had been for Kanji and Rise; the rest of the group had just been waiting around at Junes, an awkward air around them as they tried not to mention last night. To think they were so close to murdering a man in cold blood. Sent a shiver down Justin's spine thinking about it.

"No luck for me either... I didn't sense anything over there. The fog's so dense, it might be affecting my readings. I wish I could do better... I'm sorry." Rise apologized, having returned from the television. She had suspected that Teddie would go back to his own world if he wanted to run away or something, but if her scan had been evidence of anything, it was that that simply wasn't true. Teddie was nowhere to be found it would seem. Yosuke sighed and shook his head.

"That Ted... Don't tell me he really went back to his world this time... We told him over and over that he could stay here..." Yosuke sighed with irritation and annoyance, but also compassion. Teddie still hadn't received the news that Nanako was okay, and it's not like he had any reason to suspect she could come back. He was probably busy drowning himself in sorrow; and there was not a damn thing they could do about it. Poor guy.

"I'm worried for Teddie myself, but let's trust in him and await his return. Right now, we must concentrate on the case. It won't be long before Namatame is transferred to another location. We must hurry, or we will miss our only chance to get his perspective on this." Naoto interrupted the group's concerns for Teddie. Teddie was their friend and she had no intention of leaving him behind of course, but for a being who didn't need to eat drink or sleep, they had plenty of time to go searching for him. Namatame was going to be moved later this evening. Priorities dictated they needed to decide their stance on what to do with Namatame before that point, as much as no one wanted to really talk about it. Justin groaned with displeasure.

"Do we have to?" He remarked semi-sarcastically. He knew they had to, he just really didn't want to. Namatame seemed pretty damn guilty to him, and in the end he would be serving a sentence for kidnapping all those people anyway. Seemed their job was done; and besides... Justin really didn't want to raise the possibility of

committing murder again. He was just fine letting the cops do their job, thank you very much.

"Let's quickly review the facts. Of all the victims, only two were killed: Ms. Yamano, the announcer, and Saki-san. From the documents we found in the car, we know Namatame had some sort of dealings with them. After that, there were multiple attempted murders, in which we were targeted... It was only when he took Nanako-chan that we caught him in the act, identifying his modus operandi in the process. As a result of Namatame's arrest, the police admitted that Mitsuo Kubo was a mere copycat killer." Justin rolled his eyes a bit as he put his feet up on the table, as if to lean back and relax. He wanted to point out that they all already knew this to Naoto, but he supposed that was kind of the point. Didn't mean he didn't want her to shut up and move onto some new developments.

"Back up to yesterday... Remember when you said Namatame didn't have a motive to kill the announcer? That's what's bothering me." Yosuke interrupted Naoto. He didn't need a summary of the past year, he already got all of that. It was the things that had been brought up yesterday that were bothering him. If it had been anything prior to that point that had been bugging him, he wouldn't have considered throwing Namatame through the screen in the first place.

"It's hard to tell whether he's sane or not... His shadow seemed to beg to differ, but Namatame himself was... uh... a little jittery." Justin mused on the matter a bit. If he was sane enough to know what he was doing, then that seemed like good enough reason to let Namatame rot along the vine, but if he was insane, then he needed help and that was all there was to it.

"If Namatame IS sane, then there may be facts in the case we don't know about yet." Yukiko interjected. She knew everyone was on the train of thought that if Namatame was sane enough to know what he was doing, then he was by all accounts guilty of everything and deserved full punishment. But the fact of the matter was they had ALL thought he was insane prior. It was possible that they had missed more than just Namatame's state of mind.

"Always a catch..." Justin sighed as he popped open a can of soda and took a sip. Why couldn't these things be simple? Just 'yes, person a murdered person b' and end it at that. Why did there have to be all these loopholes based on a man's sanity? Hell why did it even matter? So what if he wasn't insane? The effect was still the same, the only thing that would differentiate is the punishment.

"When he talks about 'saving' people, what does that actually mean? I don't think there's any doubt that it includes kidnapping people and throwing them into the TV." Yosuke questioned. That was another thing that was rubbing him the wrong way though he couldn't put a finger on why. It seemed Namatame wanted to save his victims through death, much like Justin's shadow believed in salvation through

mutually assured destruction. That was the theory, and yet while it made sense with everything Yosuke had seen of the man, there was just something off about it all.

"Could he mean... saving them through death...? He did call himself a "savior," and said that the other side is a 'wonderful world.'" Naoto mused on the matter. It was hard to tell if the other side in this case was the television world or the afterlife, but whatever it was he meant, it was clear that he believed saving someone involved bringing them there, and he fancied himself some kind of hero kidnapping everyone for such a deed. The question though was really... was he? It all depended on the circumstances really.

"If you think about it normally, it's gotta be him... But there ain't nothin' normal about that world anyways..."

"That doesn't mean logic is completely dead though. Evidence is evidence." Justin objected. They could claim many a things about Namatame's state of mind, but they simply couldn't hide behind the fact that the other world was a mystery to them. Forensics wasn't something that changed from side to side after all, it was always consistent wherever they were.

"There's something I've been wondering about for a while. When we first encountered him, he said... 'You're the ones I saved. Don't worry, I'll save this girl too...' So um... If he "saves" people by killing them, did he save us too? Wouldn't he actually have failed to save us...?" Justin sprung up slightly in his chair. He hadn't even considered the wording on that until Yukiko pointed it out just now. That's right, if he believed in saving others through death, then he couldn't possibly have saved any of the Investigation Team as they were all alive... So then what exactly did 'saving' entail?

"You raise a good point. If he thinks that salvation comes only through death, his words to us make no sense... And another thing... The Namatame who appeared on the Midnight Channel said he failed to save Nanako-chan." Naoto continued. Goddamn Justin felt stupid for not noticing this earlier. I mean... they knew he had kidnapped everyone, but the fact of the matter was his role in the actual murders was very shaky at this point. Amazing what something as simple as word choice could do for a mystery.

"Well, maybe he really was trying to save the victims by putting them inside the TV." Everyone paused to stare at Chie with this expression of surprise, much to her embarrassment. Two for two as far as crackpot theories that actually held some kind of weight. "C-C'mon, don't get all quiet like that... You guys know I just say the first dumb thing that pops into my head... Haha..." Justin rubbed at his chin a bit. The possibility that he really intended to save them... That... couldn't be right, could it? He had seen the place with his own two eyes, surely he must have noticed that no one could be save there? It was hard to believe that was the case. There must have been something else to it...

"But he's still the one who threw in Saki-senpai and that announcer, right!? Sure, we haven't nailed down his motives, but that doesn't change the fact that he killed them. Or what, you think someone else was involved?" Yosuke interjected, face turning bright red again. He clearly didn't care much for the guy after what he did. Intentional or not, he killed those people; and he had no intention of forgiving him. Even if the intent was to save them from... whatever the fuck it was he was saving them from.

"W-Well what about the warning letters?" Yu spoke up after a while. He might have had some more evidence to support this whole 'he actually was trying to save people' angle. Figures that the guy who almost killed Namatame would be the one to have the evidence that he was innocent. 'The first one read 'dont rescue anymore'... and the second one read,'if you dont stop this time, someone close will be put in and killed'... Isn't that kinda odd? Would someone who thinks he's saving people by killing them write stuff like "don't rescue" or "kill"?"

"Yeah, and the "will be put in and killed" part doesn't make sense either... If the killer was writing it, wouldn't it be more like "I'll put in and kill"?" Kanji continued on the thought. Really, the way these letters were worded in such a way that they completely contradicted the ideals of a man who believed he was saving people. If he thought he was saving them, he wouldn't say he would be killing people, or not to rescue anyone... and he certainly wouldn't be referring to himself in third person like that; would he?

"Namatame didn't write it. It's almost like... someone else wrote this letter..." Yu muttered softly, eyes darting over the letter once again. It also begged the question as to why Justin got the letter as well, and yet no one else did. It wasn't like the two both knew Namatame or anything, and if he wanted to inform everyone in the group, why only those two in particular? Namatame had no reason to do that... but a third-party might have... The real culprit.

"But only the killer would write such a letter and deliver it to Dojima-san's house, right? If someone else wrote it, that could only mean..." Yukiko gasped suddenly. It seemed like the puzzle pieces were slowly starting to fall in place; and the picture they formed most definitely wasn't Namatame. They were so ready to kill him and he wasn't even the one who had done this. Someone else wrote those letters, and someone else was the killer. They all realized that now.

"Everything is exactly the opposite of what it first seemed... In Namatame's parlance, 'failing' would have been the first two cases, when the victims died. If he had used his method twice, and failed both times, he would hardly have continued using the TV. And yet he did. It all seems to suggest that someone else wrote this warning letter while observing the entire case..." Naoto elaborated, trying to place a finger on the criminal's true motive. She wasn't a professional criminal profiler or anything, but she could still try. And well... it seemed like Namatame hadn't even

been involved until after the first case or two. Someone else had been involved for much longer, and that was the person who wrote the letters. “ We urgently need to speak to Namatame face to face... I have a plan. But there's no time to waste. Let's hurry to the hospital!”

“Oh no... NO NO NO NO.” Maya immediately began to shake her head and mouth off disapproval. She was pretty damn vocal about not going, and Justin had no intention of forcing her to. Nor did Yosuke after what he heard the day prior. She really should get over her fear of hospitals one of these days, but that could wait until after they were done solving murders.

“What, you thought we were bringing you? And risk you kicking me again? Yeah, no thanks.”

“I'm a consultant with the police. I'd like a few words with Namatame-san. May I go in?”

Naoto had the idea of using her own credentials to get inside the room and speak to Namatame, though in truth she probably could have just waited for Plan B to kick in to effect, since the rest of the group had to get into. They simply waited around the corner, listening as Naoto spoke to the guard on duty; requesting access to the room and by extension the suspect.

“This is unit 252 requesting confirmation on an ID... Name of Naoto Shirogane... Huh? Ah, understood. I see. Well, you're on the list... I can give you a few minutes, but I'll have to record your conversation with him for security purposes. Not that I expect you'll get anything coherent out of the guy. He's been spouting nothing but gibberish.” The police officer spoke with Naoto for a while, or at least, until his walkie talkie began to buzz with life a second time. Rise didn't waste any time setting up that distraction, did she? Who would think that the head from Teddie's mascot costume would cause such a ruckus downstairs? Well to be fair, how often did you find a mascot head just lying around. “This is unit 252... huh? I see...”

“Is something the matter.”

“Something about a suspicious object out in the lobby...”

“Ah. Well then, this works out nicely. You should back up your colleagues downstairs. We'll keep watch over Namatame-san. A disturbance in a hospital lobby, after all... It sounds serious.” The Investigation Team couldn't really see what was going on around the corner of course, but they could see the police officer running around the corner to go help with the disturbance. Honestly, this went way easier than Justin expected; but he wasn't complaining. He simply made a gesture of his hand to let the others pass before him. Ladies first after all. That apparently included Kanji, Yosuke, and Yu. Given that they were in that cross-dressing pageant... not entirely untrue. “I knew they were undermanned, but I didn't expect it

to go this smoothly..." Naoto remarked with pleasant surprise as the rest of the group rounded the corner, pushing the door to Namatame's room open all the while. They didn't exactly have much time since there was nothing in Teddie's mascot suit, so every second counted. They didn't have time to dawdle around out here.

As the group stepped through the door, Namatame immediately flinched, as if preparing to try and jump for the window to escape. Trying to kill him last night probably didn't help with their investigation. After all, why would you trust someone who had tried to murder you? His reaction was understandable, though he calmed down a bit when the group insisted on keeping a certain distance away from him to give him breathing room. And in Justin's case, mockingly putting his hands in the air, as if to show him he had no ace up his sleeve here. It was just them, this room, and some questions. "Namatame-san... There's something we'd like to ask you... It's tempting to think that you were the culprit behind this entire case. And to be honest... there are many in this town who hope you are. But we are here to learn the truth. So please... answer our questions."

"Who... exactly did you throw in first?" Justin questioned, eyebrow raised. If Namatame was not their true culprit, then his answers would differentiate from the truth, correct? Assuming of course he wasn't just lying right to their faces, but given that trembling look on his face, the horror in his eyes as his previous assailants began to interrogate him, well... Why piss off someone who wouldn't hesitate to kill you? Namatame laid there in his bed, shaking for a moment before swallowing hard. It was clear he didn't entirely trust the group, but he'd do anything to keep them away at this point. He shakily raised his arm, extending his index finger out towards Yukiko.

"Huh...? Me?"

"Well I guess that settles that." Justin remarked, crossing his arms. If he didn't start until Yukiko, that meant that someone ELSE had thrown the announcer and Saki into the television. Of course, that still didn't probe that Namatame's intention wasn't to murder the teenagers, but it did set up reason to believe that he had a motivation to save people after the first two deaths. But they needed to know now if saving was actually... well... saving. "So when you say saving people... You mean killing them right?"

"No... If nobody saves them, they'll be killed... That's why... I put them in there..." Namatame frantically objected. He could feed his interrogators what they wanted to know, but he still had his integrity dammit, and the fact of the matter is he didn't kill anyone... he was sure of it. None of that was his fault. Justin passed Naoto a glance, shrugging his shoulders a bit. Seemed like they had been right about Namatame.

"Then tell me if my estimation is correct so far. After discovering the Yamano and Konishi incidents, you realized an appearance on the Midnight Channel meant certain death. Thus, to "save" her from that fate, you kidnapped Yukiko Amagi... You couldn't let her be killed, so you threw her into the TV, preventing the killer in this world from reaching her... And you repeated the process, as more individuals appeared on the Midnight Channel..." Naoto turned away from Namatame to face the others. No one really objected to her theory as it stood. Given what they knew, that actually sounded fairly accurate. Again, assuming Namatame wasn't just lying. It was hard to trust a criminal to tell the truth after all. "It all falls into place. His body is weak, but his mind is sound. He's trying to tell us the truth..." Namatame jumped a bit at that. All those who had tried to interrogate him before just thought he was spewing nonsense. To find someone who believed him, even people who had tried to shove him in... THERE; it was almost a relief.

"You... believe me...? D-Did they find him!? Did they find the one who did such cruel things!?"

"Please calm down. Our ability to find the culprit rests on you. We know about the other world. In fact, we're the only ones who can fully understand what you have to say." Naoto remarked, startled by the sudden burst of life in Namatame. He almost looked excited to find someone who actually believed him. He didn't seem like he was feigning it either, which only reinforced the belief that he was actually trying to tell them the truth. And for once, someone was listening to him. "We did blame you for everything at first. But now, I think we can accept whatever you got to tell us... as truth. Please... Tell us everything you can... Calmly and slowly."

"You're willing to listen... to my story...?" Namatame questioned cautiously, as if not sure whether to believe the people standing across the room and watching him with intrigued eyes. Even when they nodded with confirmation, he had a hard time believing it. The past was hard to ignore after all, especially yesterday, but... These kids just very well might be his only chance. He had to take it, even after what they had done. "All right... All right... I'll talk... It all started after my affair with Mayumi became common knowledge. I returned to my parent's home, as if to run away from the scandal... And I started drinking heavily to drown my anxieties... I hadn't been able to reach Mayumi at all, and that didn't help, either... She'd been disgraced on all the afternoon shows and forced to resign from the program she was on. I caused her so much trouble... I wanted to at least apologize to her, but I couldn't even do that... I lost the will and energy to do anything... Then one day, the rumor I heard some time ago came back to me. Since I had nothing better to do, I sat down blankly in front of the TV and watched my own reflection... And all of a sudden, there was Mayumi. The Mayumi inside the TV looked as if she was calling to me for help..."

"The Midnight Channel..." Yu muttered. Namatame nodded with confirmation. He probably didn't need to explain anything about what had appeared on the screen,

though it certainly did help with the imagery. Besides, they had expected that much; it seemed the only way one would know about the other side without accidentally falling into a television. And really, what idiot would do that. I mean besides Yu, Yosuke, Justin, and Chie. But no. It seemed that wasn't the case.

"When I reached out unthinkingly to touch her... my arm disappeared into the TV... as if I had dipped it into a pool of water. I was so shocked that I lost my balance and nearly fell face-first into the TV. I was so scared... I couldn't understand what just happened. I thought maybe I'd gone insane. In the end, I decided to think of it as just a dream, and I went back to the city the next day after finishing work. The next afternoon, when I got to work... I was fired on the spot, as I expected. That wasn't what broke me, though... It was Mayumi being found dead. And not just that, but it had happened in my hometown." Namatame paused for a moment, swallowing his pain for a moment. He truly did love that woman, and what had happened to her... she didn't deserve it. It was his fault he couldn't save her. He cast his eyes down in pain for a brief moment before trying to shake himself free of his guilt. There would be plenty of time for that later. "I was dumbstruck, but later on... I remembered the image of Mayumi I'd seen that night. "Was it not a dream...? Could it really have been an SOS from Mayumi...?" I hadn't touched another TV, because the first time was so terrifying, but I decided to try it again... And I confirmed that none of it was a dream. So that image... Was it something Mayumi showed me, calling for help...?"

"And eventually... you learned of the Midnight Channel." Naoto interjected. She could already see where this was going. Once Namatame realized that people popped up on that screen before they were killed, he made it his goal to assure that it couldn't happen to anyone again... Seemed he had simply picked a rather shitty method of doing so in that he was actually contributing to the problem. He nodded again with confirmation.

"I remembered that when Mayumi was alive, she was chasing a rumor about some bizarre TV program. I'd heard about it before, but I thought it was just an urban legend. But then Mayumi appeared on it, and later turned up dead. The more I thought about it, the harder it became to believe that the two events were unrelated. Soon after that, I came back to Inaba to answer the police's questions. I'd lost my job, and I wanted to know the truth of Mayumi's death for myself. Then, on another rainy night, someone else appeared on the Midnight Channel... It was a girl. She looked like she was calling for help, just like Mayumi. The first thing that came into my mind was, 'Maybe this girl will be the next to die...'"

"And that was Saki-senpai..." Yosuke blurted out rather quickly. It didn't surprise anyone that Saki was still on Yosuke's mind. Sometimes the group had to question whether or not he even cared about the other victims given how little he seemed to care about them in comparison to her. It was funny, they didn't even date or anything like that; why was he so hung up on her even now? She was a good friend, sure... But it was like he almost felt responsible for her death with how little he

seemed to care about anyone else in comparison to the girl... Well except maybe HER, but it seemed everytime he tried to say something to her shit hit the fan. He had to wonder if that was a sign

"I'd been following all the news about Mayumi, so I noticed right away that she was the girl who found Mayumi's body. And if my hunch was right, she'd be the next victim. I didn't want her to die the way Mayumi did... So I desperately kept watching... I was consumed with the idea of rescuing her. Then... little by little, her image on the screen came into sharper focus... After I came back, my father couldn't bear to see me in such low spirits, and gave me a job with the family business. I met that girl when I delivered a package to the liquor store... After agonizing over it, I decided to meet her... and told her to be careful. But that same night, on the TV... She looked as if she was being engulfed by some black shape... She was writhing in pain... The next day, they found her dead."

Yosuke sighed, as if his breath had been taken away by the mere recap of a day that still haunted his memories. Worst day of his life, and he had gone through a lot of shit. It was hard to listen to it a second time. If it was worth anything though, Justin noticed and gave Yosuke a reassuring pat on the shoulder. It didn't help, but Yosuke smiled back at him. It was strangely relaxing knowing someone who hated your guts actually gave a damn about your feelings... Not that Justin hated him, but he sure made it seem that way. "I knew she was gonna be murdered, but I couldn't save her. I blamed myself, thinking there must have been something I could've done... There was no one who depended on me. Nobody at work... Not even my wife. Mayumi was the only one who accepted me for who I was. But she was murdered, and the same person killed another girl... I was... I was beside myself... I couldn't forgive myself for doing nothing!"

"You really did love Ms. Yamano..." Chie sighed a bit. It was so touching to hear of true love such as theirs; not so much the fact that she was brutally murdered of course, but still. She felt awful for Namatame, losing someone he cared so deeply about. She couldn't imagine what it would be like if she lost Justin like that... Though to be fair, she almost did when he ended up getting thrown in the television... Hey actually... wasn't Justin's name missing from that book Naoto found at the wreck? Why was everyone else there except him? Must have been their true culprit that tried to do the boy in; certainly wasn't Namatame here.

"Yes, from the bottom of my heart... Before I was married, my wife made it big in show business. I was happy for her, but it put a strain on our relationship. It was around that time when I met Mayumi... She was interviewing our candidate for the next election. She was a big-name announcer, but she only worked with local stations, and her attitude towards work was similar to mine. We both came from Inaba, so she was easy to talk to... I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't help getting intimate with her. She gave meaning to my life." Namatame paused to take a deep breath, trying to drown out the painful memory of Yamano's death. They could

question him on anything, but please... don't make him remember her death. "Soon after Saki-san was found dead, yet another girl appeared on TV... That was you." He spoke up, pointing towards Yukiko. "My opponent was a murderer who left no clues to his identity... I thought hard about what I could do to protect her from someone like that. The girl inside the TV looked as if she was smiling at me... And... that's when it hit me. I apparently had the power to go through the TV screen to the other side... Then, what if I put her into the TV and give her shelter there before the killer gets her...? I thought, no matter what kind of place it might be, it's better than being slaughtered. Once things calmed down, I could just let her out again... It felt as if everything was starting to come together in my mind... Could it be... that Mayumi gave me that power, to prevent any more victims from meeting her fate...? Was it my mission to save people? But there was a big problem... If I explained the situation to the victim, they wouldn't understand. I had already tried that and failed miserably. It seemed the only thing I could do was take them away. If that was my mission... I'd just have to do it... Or so I thought.

"So, since you thought people who appeared on the Midnight Channel would be killed, you kidnapped us in order to save us..." Yukiko sighed, slightly upset. She was grateful in a strange way. She wasn't too pleased with being dumped into that slaughterhouse, but at the same point, his intentions were good. And it was true she probably wouldn't believe him if he tried to tell her... If only he knew what kind of place that had been, or that he was being manipulated. He legitimately wanted to do good... and he did have the power to do so. Chie didn't seem to quite feel as indebted though.

"Mission!? Give me a break! You never stopped and wondered about any of this!?"

"She's got a point, you know." Justin remarked with stern eyes. I mean honestly, you can't just go running around playing vigilante without knowing the kind of damage you were doing. Justin could understand wanting to help, and he admired THAT much. He just couldn't believe Namatame was stupid enough to not even look into his investment. But then, he was a politician, so it kind of made sense.

"I thought I was the only one who could help them... I did call the police, but they didn't believe me. I knew the area well, thanks to my job. I had a large truck, and I could move around without suspicion... I thought my job as a deliveryman would be the perfect cover for my mission. I thought no one else could do it... But... are you telling me that I wasn't saving them...?" Namatame tried to justify his actions ever so slightly. I mean to be fair, he did take some kind of initiative before taking matters into his own hands; it was just... Come on, stick your head in or something. Hell, he didn't think something was up when he didn't even pull them out? They just kinda reappeared in the real world without any questions? Come on, he knew something was up."

"If a person is still within the TV world when the fog appears here, they will die. Beginning with Yukiko-san, the people you thought you had been saving were, in fact, in mortal peril... It was my friends here who really saved us all." Naoto explained to Namatame, scolding him slightly for his rash behavior.

"I had a feeling that was it... When I went after that little girl and entered the TV myself... For the first time, I had some doubts about myself."

"Then why the fuck didn't you stop!?" Justin shouted with exasperation. Don't get him wrong, he was still on Namatame's side in the sense that he respected what he was trying to do something good; but come on. These lapses of judgment were just fucking idiotic sometimes. He shook his head a bit. He had a good reason for that too.

"The police were after me, so I had to get away. But I still felt I needed to do everything I could to save that poor little girl... That's why I went in after her. But the TV world was completely different than I imagined... Such an abominable, grotesque place. I knew that the three of you who I "saved" went back to your normal lives, so I didn't realize how terrible that world was. I never knew... you couldn't even get out of that place on your own... I thought I was going insane-I probably did. And you know the rest. When I came to, I was lying in a hospital bed."

"...You really were trying to save people..."

"But I ended up doing just the opposite... What a fool. I always wanted to enter the world of politics, and become useful to society... But after losing my job and the woman I loved... all I had left was this power. I convinced myself that world was some sort of sanctuary... And I secretly believed myself to be a hero... I never doubted what I saw on TV... and believed everything was as I wanted it to be... I didn't think for myself at all... That's why I couldn't protect them. I'm to blame for all of this..." Namatame shook his head with disappointment and defeat. He should have known better, but secretly, he just wanted the spotlight as some savior... And that's why all of this had to happen.

"What's done is done... You didn't know any better." Yu encouraged him. Namatame was needless to say a little surprised to see people who had tried to murder him so forgiving now that he explained everything. Why exactly didn't he deal with kids these violently bipolar when he was in office again...? It didn't really matter; he wasn't surprised for long. "But if you ever touch Nanako again I'll slit your throat myself." Yu clarified, crossing his arms.

"Yu!"

"I suppose so... But the things I've done are too serious to be brushed aside like that... I have no intentions of running away from my crimes. I'm prepared to face the consequences. Kidnapping is already a serious crime... And on top of that, I put

all those lives in danger. I'm sorry..." Namatame apologized again, brushing off Yu's threat. He kind of deserved it admittedly, and besides; he had no intention of getting involved any further, so he had nothing to fear.

"The Midnight Channel and the other world... You can hardly be blamed for failing to understand them properly. We must apologize to you as well. Had we let our emotions blind us to the truth, we would have piled all the responsibility on you."

"Yeah sorry about the whole trying to murder you thing." Justin continued on Naoto's thought, only slightly sarcastically mind you. The way he delivered his apology was completely sarcastic, don't get him wrong, but the actual apology itself was genuine.

"I guess from your point of view... people did stop dying once you started 'saving' people. The more you did it, the more you really believed you were preventing their deaths..." Yosuke reasoned to himself, as if to try and justify all the atrocities that had been committed. In Namatame's position, he could understand why he thought he was making a difference, but... Dammit, it was so hard to forgive him. At least now Yosuke knew Namatame had no hand in Saki's death... That was at least a little reassuring.

"I beg you... Please find whoever's behind this... You children are the only ones who know about that world..." Namatame suddenly leaned forward, pleading with the children. His time was done; he had played his role in the case, and now the responsibility must be passed off to someone else. He wouldn't be able to sleep easy knowing people were still dying. The group smiled, nodding in confirmation.

"Of course; This bastard's not going to get away with this." Justin spoke up with pride and courage. "Nothing's going to stand between us and solving this crim-"

"Wha-!? What're you all crammed in here for!?"

"COPS! CHEEZE IT!" Justin declared before making a mad dash past the officer and out the door.

So much for courage.